

healthy skepticism that I had back in December as we were finishing that legislative year. I will say this; that for the past year, the Democratic majority has indulged an administration that has treated their electoral victory like a mandate to enact some of the most irresponsible and radical policies we have seen in over a generation.

Now they are dusting off an agenda that is so unhinged, it has kept the Democrats deadlocked against one another for the year. We have seen this agenda breed mistrust, tension, and anger between the American people and their government. Few, if any, of those people could state that they are better off now than they were under President Trump and Republican leadership. But still, the Democratic majority has continued to push Biden's agenda on behalf of the most radical portions of their base.

Yes, leaning left—they are leaning far left. They are listening to the social justice warriors and the climate partisans and the Big Government activists, and the Democratic leadership is doing exactly what they are telling them they want done. Meanwhile, they are ignoring the people back home who actually have to deal with the consequences of this political tunnel vision.

Time after time in poll after poll, even more polls that have come out today, the American people have made it abundantly clear that they are not just dissatisfied with the President's failure to lead, with his radical agenda—you know what, they are not just angry. What I learned from Tennesseans is that people are really frightened by what they see taking place with this far-left, hard-left turn.

President Biden has to know all of this. The Democratic leadership has to know all of this. Look at all the polls. It doesn't matter if it is NPR, it doesn't matter if it is AP, it doesn't matter if it is CNN, the agenda, the President, the Vice President—they are all underwater. I think they have probably seen this coming since day one of this disastrous administration.

Take some of the specific issues. The Democratic leadership has had a front row seat to what is happening on the southern border. So has the administration. There has been a complete collapse of our Nation's sovereignty at the southern border. With the stroke of a pen, President Biden dismantled the policies that were keeping us safe. He invited waves of illegal immigrants into the country, said: Y'all come. Y'all come. We are ready for you.

He threw the Border Patrol and local law enforcement under the bus, did not listen to them. You don't have to take my word for it. Go to the southern border. Go visit with them.

He has let the cartel step into the leadership void at the southern border. The drug dealers and the human traffickers are in control of the southern border at this point in time. You do not cross that border unless you have

paid the cartels. But you know what, admitting this does not fit the agenda of the Democratic leadership, so they just ignore it. Now, President Biden and my Democratic colleagues continue to evade responsibility for keeping the border secure and safeguarding the national security. They don't want to talk about that.

They are also not wanting to talk about the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party and our other adversaries abroad. And that is right—the Chinese Communist Party is an adversary. They are not a competitor. They are not a friend or a frenemy. They are an adversary. What are they doing? They are conducting surveillance, academic espionage, and intellectual property theft. They are doing this every single day. It is all part of the standing operating procedures of the new axis of evil and all being ignored by people who are charged with running this country, keeping this country safe.

Tennesseans will tell you they are very concerned. The American people are very concerned. The polls are showing it. And they are blaming the Biden administration for not feeling safe, not feeling secure, for the supply chain crisis, for inflation. These are all things that have been brought about in the past year by decisions this administration has made, Executive orders they have executed.

Every time people in this country pick up their phone, they are faced with the knowledge that many of the programs and social media platforms that they once enjoyed are controlled by people who refuse to prioritize privacy and data security and realize that these cyber protections are important.

They are grateful for all the sunlight that you and I, Mr. President, have been able to shine on the problems with Big Tech. So many times as I was at home, people would mention to me how much they have learned through the hearings that we have held, the roundtable discussions, and they are wanting to see more attention brought to keeping us safe and limiting the surveillance, the property theft, and the academic espionage that the Chinese Communist Party and our adversaries are conducting in the virtual space. They are looking forward to seeing us translate this bipartisan consensus into action. They are looking forward to what we are going to deliver when it comes to online privacy, data security, section 230 reforms, to protect our innovators, to protect our children online, to protect our consumers.

When people look at what is being done, like the work we have done on technology policy, and what is not being done when it comes to addressing China, addressing Russia, dealing with Iran, when it comes to dealing with inflation, prices at the pump, and prices that are happening at the grocery store, they look at this and they say: Where is the President? Where is the Vice President? Where are people who should be working for the American people in Congress?

When we talk about the Democratic leadership, we know that they are too busy catering to the most radical fringe of the Democratic Party to do their job, and they are too busy with that to govern or to keep the economy in one piece and to keep the border intact or to provide for the common defense or to exercise a little oversight over some of the world's most powerful corporations.

Well, the American people deserve better. Tennesseans are wanting to see action. So while some of our colleagues across the aisle have a renewed sense of optimism about President Biden's ability to pull them out of this skid on this agenda that is going nowhere, the American people have spoken. They do not want what you are offering.

My resolve is going to be to stand here, to stand between what is happening, this destructive, as I call it, "Build Back Broke" agenda, and to protect Tennesseans and future generations of Americans from such an adverse and negative impact.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the Democrats' agenda for the new year.

The American people have just come back from the most expensive Christmas in our Nation's history, coronavirus cases are breaking records all around the country, and many Americans spent their Christmas with their travel plans canceled.

Joe Biden now enters his second year in office with record-high inflation, record-high coronavirus cases, and a record-low approval rating. Now, Joe Biden is breaking all kinds of records, and each of these records reflects an America that is heading in the wrong direction.

The American people have two major concerns right now: coronavirus and what it costs to live their daily lives. Yet these two issues are not even on the radar of Democrats in Washington, DC.

In fact, Democrats have only made these problems worse. First, Democrats have unquestionably driven up the cost of living on American families. Inflation shot up after Democrats put \$2 trillion on America's credit card this spring.

Democrats told us inflation was transitory. They said it month after month after month. On the day after Christmas, Margaret Brennan of CBS News asked the Vice President a very basic question. She asked: Was it wrong to consider inflation transitory?

It is not a gotcha question. It is a question American families have asked themselves month after month after month, as they heard Democrats say it was transitory. Well, to the American people the answer is very clear. It is obvious. Of course, it was wrong by the administration, by the President, by the Vice President to try to mislead the American people by claiming that inflation was transitory.

So what did we hear from the Vice President in response to this question that has been of great concern to the American people?

What we heard was 118 words of incoherent rambling. She was like a deer in headlights on a basic question on the top issue of the day. Either the Vice President is out of touch with the needs of the American people or she just didn't want to admit that the Biden administration had been wrong month after month after month, until the inflation numbers hit a 4-year high.

It has gone on now for 9 months and, you know, it is only going to get worse. That is what the experts are telling us. In October, we saw the worst inflation in 30 years, and, in November, it became the worst inflation in 40 years.

Prices have gone up faster than wages. This means the average American family can purchase a lot less today than they could when Joe Biden took office.

And the biggest price increases, of course, have been in energy. In November, we saw the biggest energy price increase in 10 years. CNBC reports that one-fifth of American families couldn't afford to pay an energy bill this past year. Roughly the same percentage have kept their home at an unhealthy temperature because they can't afford the cost of providing heat.

People who travelled for Christmas faced some of the highest Christmas Day prices in history. Gas cost \$1 more a gallon this Christmas than it did last Christmas—1 year, \$1 a gallon more.

Many people couldn't travel because of coronavirus. Americans broke records for coronavirus cases twice last week. Ohio, Maryland, and here in the District of Columbia, all broke records for hospitalizations due to coronavirus.

Now, remember when Joe Biden ran for office? He said he was the cure for coronavirus. This guy ought to be sued for medical malpractice.

He came into office with two safe and effective vaccines. Millions of people have already been vaccinated. Yet more Americans have now died from coronavirus under President Joe Biden than under the previous President. From day one of this administration, this President has been inconsistent, incoherent, and incompetent.

The flip-flop on masks for the vaccinated has continued. The administration kowtowed to the teachers union on mask mandates for toddlers. They flip-flopped on booster shots. They flip-flopped again on testing.

For months now, countries like the United Kingdom have sent rapid tests

to their citizens through the mail. On December 23, President Biden told ABC News: "I wish I had thought about ordering . . . [at-home test kits] two months ago."

Well, it turns out the White House did think about it. The media is now reporting that the White House turned down a plan to mail test kits in October.

In early December, the White House Press Secretary was asked why the Biden administration wasn't mailing out tests. After all, the Democrats, on a straight party-line vote in March, put \$2 trillion on our Nation's credit card under the guise of COVID relief. Only 9 percent of the money went for healthcare. Where did that money go? Billions and tens of billions of dollars, so-called for testing, in the bill that the Democrats forced on a party-line vote, and yet there aren't tests in the country because people are lined up around the block waiting for tests that the President wished he had thought about.

That is what he told the world. That is what he said on ABC News.

In early December, the White House Press Secretary was asked why the Biden administration wasn't mailing out tests. She mocked the idea. Then, just a few weeks later, it became the policy of this same administration—too little, too late, another flip-flop, another example of the hypocrisy and the incompetence of this administration.

Someone in the press ought to ask Joe Biden if he still believes what he said as a candidate. So let's review what he said as a candidate.

In September of 2020, Joe Biden said: "If the president had done his job from the beginning"—he was referring to President Trump—Biden said, "all the people would still be alive." "All the people," he said. "I'm not making this up"—Joe Biden once again telling the world he is not making it up.

I don't know of a single doctor or public health official anywhere in the world who would agree with that statement by Joe Biden, then candidate for President. Yet Joe Biden said it repeatedly.

As a candidate, Joe Biden said: "Any President who is responsible for that many deaths should not remain as President."

And to that I say: Joe Biden, you are right now responsible for that many deaths. So, maybe, you shouldn't remain as President either.

Joe Biden attacked the previous administration for letting Governors manage the response to coronavirus. Yet just last month, Joe Biden admitted: "There is no Federal solution" to the coronavirus.

Does Joe Biden still believe what he said as a candidate?

Did he ever believe it?

What does he know? What does he think? What does he believe? Or was he just running for President on the Big Lie?

Now, even for Democrats in Washington, the hypocrisy and the incompetence are astonishing. Now the American people all across this country are suffering the consequences of the mismanagement by this administration.

Flights, train departures, public events are all being canceled due to the resurgence of coronavirus. Cancellations continue today because of coronavirus under the President who said he would solve the problem, to the point that even the majority party's conference, which should have been a lunch, today was moved to be virtual because of the virus that Joe Biden said he would eliminate.

Joe Biden's lies and flip-flops continue. Joe Biden said he wouldn't issue a vaccine mandate. He said it on several occasions and then he broke his word. In the process, he took a sledgehammer to the American workforce, forcing people out of their jobs.

The Biden administration has also issued a mask mandate for children as young as 2 years of age, in preschool.

Just before Christmas, Senator LUMMIS, also from Wyoming, and I introduced a bill to stop this mandate. There is no scientific basis for forcing toddlers to wear masks. This isn't about the science. It has been shown that the teachers union lobbied for mask mandates in schools.

On May 13, the Centers for Disease Control issued its mask guidance for vaccinated people—for people who had been fully vaccinated. The guidance from the Centers for Disease Control said that fully vaccinated people could stop wearing masks indoors.

What happened the very next day?

Well, the very next day, the head of the National Education Association, the teachers union, called the Director of the Centers for Disease Control. The day after that, the Centers for Disease Control released new guidance—new guidance—saying vaccinated people should wear masks in schools. Maybe it was a coincidence. It doesn't look like it or sound like it to me. This flip-flop looks like a kind of political pandering, the pandering to union bosses that this administration has engaged in since day one.

The American people have two big concerns right now: coronavirus and the cost of living. Democrats on Capitol Hill continue to ignore the two biggest concerns of the American people.

What are the Democrats in this body focused on instead? Well, for 5 months now, Democrats in this body have tried to pass the largest spending bill in history.

What is it focused on? Not inflation; not COVID; not crime in the cities, where murder rates are at an all-time high; not border security, where the number of people coming in illegally, carrying disease and drugs, is at an all-time high. No, the Democrats want to focus instead on climate change and new entitlements. Their bill included

trillions and trillions of dollars in new taxes and trillions and trillions of dollars in new debt.

President Biden and nearly every Democrat in Congress went on record in support of this socialist budget bill. Not a single Republican supports it, and not even every Democrat supports it. Now Democrats are fighting among themselves, and it is an absolute disgrace. Democrats ought to be thankful that bill didn't pass, because if it passed, inflation would get worse, just in time for elections.

This isn't what the American people want. The American people have many concerns right now about the direction of this country and the direction that the President is trying to lead the Nation. The two biggest concerns are the coronavirus in their communities and the cost of living that impacts on them, on the people every day. Democrats are failing on both.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

CHINA

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, we have started a new year, 2022, filled with opportunities and possibilities. Yet, even as we contemplate new beginnings, many things remain the same, especially when it comes to the crimes and atrocities being carried out by the Chinese Communist Party.

The genocide against the Uighur Muslims is still ongoing—a million individuals enslaved. The attacks on democracy and the silencing of free speech in Hong Kong continue. In fact, it was just announced that one of Hong Kong's last remaining pro-democracy news outlets, Citizen News, is shutting its doors because it cannot continue operations under the current climate of repression under China's national security law. In spite of all that, just 31 days from today, leaders and athletes from across the world will gather in Beijing to celebrate the opening ceremonies of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games.

The Olympic Games are meant to inspire and to bring people together to build a better world, using sports to foster what the Olympic movement describes as a peaceful society, concerned with the preservation of human dignity, but China is not using these games to advance human dignity; it is using the games to polish its international image and hide its crimes and abuses. A peaceful society, concerned with the preservation of human dignity, would not idly stand by and allow its government to silence those who speak out for the rights of their fellow workers. Yet we see that happening time and time again in China.

This picture is of Fang Ran. He is a 26-year-old Ph.D. student in Hong Kong University's Sociology Department, where he studies Chinese labor relations and the Chinese labor movement. It is reported that Fang, while conducting fieldwork on his thesis about labor empowerment in China, in his

hometown on the mainland last August, was taken into custody by the Chinese authorities under the phrase "residential surveillance at a designated location."

What is "residential surveillance at a designated location"?

It is a coercive measure that allows authorities to hold individuals for up to 6 months, with no access to lawyers and no access to family at all.

Apparently, his research, as well as frequent social media posts about workers' rights, sexual harassment, and the displacement of migrant workers, put him on Beijing's radar.

According to one article, this young man roamed the factory towns of southern China, immersing himself in workers' lives and supporting them while they tried to strike or seek compensation for work injuries.

Even the fact that he is a loyal member of the Communist Party did not save him from officials' ire. One of his friends said that, in the months leading up to his disappearance, Fang had repeatedly been asked to drink tea. "Drink tea" is a code word for being summoned for questioning and harassment by Chinese security services. It has now been 4 months since the last time he was invited to "drink tea," and he has not been seen again. He has been detained because of his advocacy for workers in China—workers, in fact, like 31-year-old Chen Guojian, a gig delivery worker. Gig delivery workers were essential during the pandemic to deliver food, groceries, and other needed items.

While delivering scores of takeout orders a day, Chen would film short videos that showed the dangerous working conditions of the delivery workers, and he used those videos to advocate not just for better pay but for action against powerful Chinese e-commerce companies that benefit from fostering dangerous work conditions. Whether he intended it or not, this man, driving along on his electric scooter, wearing his bright, windproof jacket, became a rarity in China—a labor leader and organizer.

Then, suddenly, last February—almost a year ago—he disappeared. Over the course of the COVID pandemic, a movement for labor rights had begun to grow and gained mainstream traction, and delivery workers like Chen, who were lifelines for untold millions, could be seen outside every apartment building and every office building. There were symbols of this growing movement.

So, in the eyes of the Chinese Government, individuals like Chen had to be stopped—stopped from advocating, in even the smallest way, for any sort of collective effort to improve the condition of Chinese workers. So, almost a year ago, he was detained and given the catchall charge of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." So many dissidents in China have been detained over the last few years for picking quarrels and provoking trouble because

Chen believed, as he said in one of his videos, that "delivery workers are humans, too, not robots, though the system wants to make us like cogs in a machine." His case is being handled with great secrecy by authorities.

About a month into his detention, friends and supporters began collecting donations to cover his legal fees. They raised about \$20,000, but then the Chinese officials contacted every person who donated, warning them not to help Chen. When the officials visited his parents to deliver a notice of his detention, they demanded his father sign the notice even though it was impossible for his father to read what was on the notice because of several lines being smudged out. So the father had no idea what he was actually acknowledging on that paperwork. Chen, for advocating for improvements in worker conditions, is facing up to 5 years in a Chinese prison.

His status and his future are unclear, but I call on the Chinese Government: Release those you have detained, like this young man who was working to make conditions better for workers in China.

Well, here we are, just 31 days from the start of the Winter Olympics in China—Olympics that the International Olympic Committee says are about a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

I say to the Chinese Government: Wouldn't it be the right thing to do for human dignity to release individuals who have simply spoken up like these two young men did for their fellow workers?

I say to the International Olympic Committee: Wouldn't it be the right thing for you to call on the Chinese Government to release individuals like these two young men who have simply spoken up to improve the condition of their fellow workers? Wouldn't that be consistent with human dignity?

I will tell you what is not consistent with human dignity, and that is Chinese genocide against the Uighur community, enslaving near a million people. What is not consistent with human dignity is striking down the free press in Hong Kong. The slogan of the Washington Post is, "Democracy Dies in Darkness," and that is the goal of the Chinese Government—to drive a stake through the democratic rights of Hong Kong citizens.

As we approach these games, let us not allow the Chinese Government and the Communist Party to hide their repression behind the glitz and glamour of Olympic Gold. Let's, instead, dedicate ourselves to calling out, time and time again, the oppression the Chinese Government is engaged in and demand justice that delivers human dignity.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Iowa.

FALSE CLAIMS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we study about checks and balances in government in political science classes.